



VICTORIA GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Social Media Policy for Learners

Ratified at the School Governing Body meeting of 29 January 2020

POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LEARNERS

1 Policy purpose

Social media and general internet use is a valuable part of our society, and it is up to each individual in the school community to make best use of social media to promote the school's excellence. The purpose of the **Victoria Girls' High School Social Media Policy for Learners** is to establish rules and provide guidance for learners on the use of social media; to establish a culture of transparency, trust and integrity in social media activities; and to encourage the integration of social media into our teaching and learning environments.

- 1.1 Victoria Girls' High School recognises the value of teaching enquiry, investigation and innovation using new technology tools to enhance the learning experience.
- 1.2 The school also recognises and accepts its authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content; and its obligation to teach responsible and safe use of the new technologies, as well as the importance of online social media networks as communication and e-learning tool.
- 1.3 In line with these values and responsibilities, the school will exercise its right to limit public access to various aspects of the social media within its own social media environment
- 1.4 With a view to implementing the school's aims and responsibilities, and responding to new technologies, this policy addresses learners' use of publicly available social media networks, including the following: personal websites, web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds and any other social media.

2 Definitions

The following meanings are ascribed to technical terms within the context of this policy:

- 2.1 **Avatar** means: an icon or figure representing a particular person in a computer game, Internet forum, etc.
- 2.2 **Blogs** means: the blogs or journals where authors and users can post a textual, audio and video content, and where some permit others to post comments on their blogs.
- 2.3 **Guests** means: people using the school's social media space and includes, but is not limited to, visitors, workshop attendees, volunteers, adult education staff and learners, governing body members, Independent contractors, vendors and school consultants.
- 2.4 **Media sharing** means: using websites where users post and share videos, audio files and/or photos as well as tag them to enable searchability. (Examples include YouTube, Flickr, Picasa and Google Video.)
- 2.5 **Microblogs** means: websites and spaces that allow users to post short blog entries. (for example, Twitter, Facebook and Foursquare).

- 2.6 **Public social media networks** means: websites, web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds and any other social media generally available to the public or consumers, and which do not fall within the school's electronic technologies network (e.g. MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Edmodo, Yammer.)
- 2.7 **School-approved password-protected social media tools** means: those that fall within the school's electronic technologies network or which the school has approved for educational use.
- 2.8 **Social media use** means: communication, collaborative sharing, and reaching out to learners, employees and guests for educational purposes, using school-provided websites, platforms, resources or documents. Examples include, but are not limited to, Google Apps, Ning, Teacher Tube, Moodle and Gaggle.
- 2.9 **Social networks** means: websites where users can create customised profiles and form connections with other users based on shared characteristics and interests.
- 2.10 **Users** means: learners, employees, guests and others who make use of the school's networks, systems, computers and devices, or any other such devices brought onto the school premises, for carrying out their social media activities
- 2.11 **Virtual world** means: web or software-based platforms that allow users to create avatars or representations of themselves, and through these avatars to meet, socialise and contact with other users. (Second life is an example of a virtual world.)
- 2.12 **Wikis** means: resources or documents edited collaboratively by a community of users with varying levels of editorial control by the website publisher. (Wikipedia is the best known example.)

3 Social network provisioning and usage

- 3.1 In striving to meet its aims and obligations in terms of media and technology involvement, the school provides password-protected social media tools and school-approved technologies for e-learning and encourages the use of school tools for collaboration by employees.
- 3.2 The above notwithstanding, public social media networks outside of those approved by the school may not be used for classroom instruction or school-sponsored activities without the prior authorisation of principal or his/her delegate, and parental consent for learner participation on social networks.

4 The school's rights and authority

- 4.1 The principal and or his/her delegate are granted authority through this policy to create rules, administrative and other regulations and protocols for the carrying out of the purpose of this policy.
- 4.2 Within the social media context, users are required to comply fully with this policy and its accompanying administrative regulations and all other relevant school policies, regulations, rules, procedures, social media terms of use and other legal documents, as well as local, provincial and national laws concerning social media.
- 4.3 All cyber actions by users attached to the school in any way must be conducted in accordance with the law, assist in the protection of the school's resources, ensure compliance with this policy and its administrative regulations, as well as other school policies, regulations, rules and procedures, social media and Internet service providers' terms, and local, provincial and national laws.
- 4.4 The school has a right, but not a duty, to inspect, review or retain any electronic communication created, sent, displayed, received or stored on or over the school's electronics systems; and to monitor, record, check, track, log, access or otherwise inspect the content of its systems.
- 4.5 In addition, and in accord with the law, the school has the right, but not a duty, to inspect, review or retain any electronic communications created, sent, displayed, received or

stored on users' personal computers, electronic devices, networks, internet or electronic communication systems; and also in data-bases, files, software, and media that contain school information and data.

- 4.6 Also, in accordance with the law, the school has the right, but not the duty, to inspect, review, or retain electronic communications created, sent, displayed, received or stored on another entity's computer or electronic device when users bring to and use such other entities' computers or electronic devices at a school location, function or event, or connect it to the school network and/or systems, or any system that contains school programs, or school data or information.
- 4.7 The school will cooperate to the extent legally required of it with social media sites, internet service providers, local, provincial and state officials in investigations or with other legal requests, whether the actions be criminal or civil.
- 4.8 If any user believes that there is a conflict in the requirements with which he or she is obligated to comply, the matter must be brought to the attention of a supervisor, principal or head of publicity and marketing who will follow through with the matter.

5 School expectations of its learners

- 5.1 Responsible staff members are required to ensure that this policy is understood by learners working within their area of control.
- 5.2 As the line between professional and personal relationships is blurred within the social media context, ***the school takes no position on an individual learner's decision to participate in the use of social media networks for personal use during personal time: however, use of these media for personal use during school time is prohibited.***
- 5.3 It is the responsibility of all users to consider carefully their behaviour and what they place online when communicating with, or "friending" any individual.
- 5.4 Learners and parents must understand that when employees choose to engage with, or join the school's learners, families or fellow employees in a social media context that exists outside of those approved by the school, the employees are expected to maintain their professionalism as school employees and to accept responsibility for addressing or reporting inappropriate behaviour or activity by learners on these networks.
- 5.5 In similar vein, learners and parents need to recognise that staff members have been told that they should not engage in social interaction with learners through social networking sites unless there is an educationally valid context. In the event of a complaint or allegation being received by the school in this regard, the school will follow through and investigate the matter, and responsibility will be on the staff member to demonstrate that the use was appropriate.
- 5.6 Users should have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send, receive or display on or over the school's various electronic systems, or the school's authorised third-party systems, including their personal files or any of the use of these systems.
- 5.7 All learners are expected to serve as positive ambassadors for the school and to be respectful in all communications (whether by word, image or other means).
- 5.8 Learners may not coerce others into providing passwords, login details or other security access information to them so that they may access social media or locations that they have no authorisation to access.
- 5.9 The school reserves the right to access, view, record, check, receive, monitor, track, log, store or otherwise inspect and utilise any or all of its own systems, as well as authorised third-party systems, and to monitor and allocate file server space.
- 5.10 Users using the school's systems or authorized third-party systems in use on or via the school premises or network to transmit or receive communications and information shall be deemed to have consented to having the content of any such communication accessed, viewed, recorded, checked, received, monitored, tracked, logged, stored or otherwise inspected or utilised by the school, and to monitor and allocate file server space.

- 5.11 Passwords and message delete functions do not restrict the school's ability or rights to access such communications or information.
- 5.12 Anything posted on a learner's website or web blog, or any Internet content for which the learner is responsible, is subject to all school rules, regulations and guidelines.
- 5.13 The school is entitled to view and monitor a learner's website or web blog at any time without consent or previous approval.

6 Inappropriate usage

- 6.1 Learners shall not use obscene, profane or vulgar language on any social media network, nor engage in communication or conduct that is racist, harassing, threatening, bullying, libellous or defamatory; or that discusses or encourages any illegal activity or the inappropriate use of alcohol or illegal drugs; improper sexual behaviour, sexual harassment or bullying.
- 6.2 Learners may not use their school e-mail addresses for communications on public social media networks that have not been approved by the school.
- 6.3 Learners must make it clear that any views expressed are their own, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the school.
- 6.4 Learners may not act as a spokesperson for the school, or post comments as a representative of the school, except when authorised to do so by the principal or the principal's delegate.
- 6.5 Learners may not disclose information on any social media network that is confidential or proprietary to the school, its learners or employees, or that is protected by data privacy laws.
- 6.6 Learners may not use or post the school's logo on any social media network without permission from the principal or his/her delegate.
- 6.7 Learners may not post images of other learners on any social media network without written consent from the parent of the learner whose image is to be posted, and also from the principal (or his or her delegate), except in the case of images taken in the public arena, such as at sporting events or public performances.
- 6.8 Learners may not post any non-public images of the school premises and property, including floor plans.
- 6.9 Because other users of social media networks may view the learner as a representative of the school, the school requires/expects learners to observe the following rules when referring to the school, its learners, programmes, activities, employees, volunteers or communities on any social media networks:
 - 6.9.1 A learner's use of any social media network and a learner's postings, displays or communications on any social media network must comply with all regulations and laws, and any applicable school or departmental policies.
 - 6.9.2 Learners are responsible for their own behaviour when communicating on social media, including being held accountable for the content of the communications that they post, state or on-send on social media locations.
 - 6.9.3 Learners should note that information that they place in the social media, even though it may be designated as private, can be accessed for litigation purposes, distributed by friends and can be accessed in various other legal ways.
 - 6.9.4 Inappropriate communications may not be posted on social media, including but not limited to:
 - 6.9.4.1 confidential, personally identifiable or sensitive school information about learners, employees and guests;
 - 6.9.4.2 child pornography, sexually exploitative material, bullying/cyber bullying or inappropriate commercialisation of childhood experiences;
 - 6.9.4.3 defamatory or discriminatory statements or images;
 - 6.9.4.4 infringed-upon intellectual property, such as copyright ownership;

- 6.9.4.5 terroristic threats; and
- 6.9.4.6 illegal items or activities.

7 Interaction with social media groups

- 7.1 The school recognises that learner groups or members of the public may create social media platforms representing learners or groups within the school.
- 7.2 When employees, including coaches and consultants, choose to join in or engage with these social networking groups, they do so as an employee of the school, and their status and standing vis-a-vis their learners is not altered by the fact that engagements take place on social networks.
- 7.3 Learners have a co-responsibility for maintaining appropriate teacher-learner and learner-learner relationships at all times, and also for reporting or addressing inappropriate behaviour or activity on social media networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online.

8 Consequences of any breach of this policy

- 8.1 This policy and its various rules, regulations or guidelines, incorporate all other relevant school policies, such as, but not limited to, learner discipline policies, codes of conduct, acceptable use policies, copyright and anti-discrimination policies.
- 8.2 General rules for behaviour, ethics and communications apply when using social networking systems and information, in addition to the stipulations of this policy and the school's various regulations.
- 8.3 Users must be aware that violations of this policy or other rules or guidelines on social media may result in loss of access and a variety of other disciplinary actions, including, but not limited to, warnings, usage restrictions, loss of privileges, position reassignment, oral or written reprimands, suspension and/or expulsion, as well as legal proceedings on a case-by-case basis.

Signed:

Chair of the VGHS Governing Body

Principal

Acknowledgements: the policy is based on the GBF policy which has drawn on the following sources:

- Don't film yourself having sex: *Sadleir and De Beer*
- Cyber law: maximising safety and minimising risk in classrooms: *Bissonette*
- *Kodak online; Intel.com; IBM.com*
- *South Africa's Government Communication and Information System; and various school, education district and state social media policies in the USA and Australia*